**Woden/Weston Creek/Molonglo**

**Mount Taylor Horse Paddocks**

Where it it: access is from Athllon Drive, but possibly also from the neighbouring suburb (Torrens).

This is quite a large area, mainly grassland, but there are some higher rocky areas with tree cover, which are all fenced. Some fences are easy to negotiate, but in one spot I had to walk along the fence until I found a damaged section to get through. I visited on a cold and windy day, but still managed 18 species. I suspect it might be much more productive in spring. A walk along the fence on the southern side, which separates the bushland from the paddocks, might also be worthwhile, but I'd had enough of the wind before I got that far!

**Isaacs Pines - main track from Long Gully Rd to the suburb of Isaacs.**

This is a straight out-and-back vehicle track, with bush on both sides for several hundred metres. This early morning foray was notable for **Silvereyes**. A large flock flew over as I started, and smaller groups all along the track were foraging high in the foliage. I’m sure I missed quite a few small birds on this outing - a cold morning and the obligatory mask meant frequent fogging of glasses, and my binos were also fogging up in the cold. There is a promising area, yet to be explored, of bush on the left of the track, near an underpass over to Farrer Ridge.

**Isaacs Pines - loop walk**

A short walk taking in a small section of Centenary Trail and a section of an equestrian trail. I left the main track (above) by taking a track close to ethe ntrance which leads up to the Centenary Trail. I headed back towards Long Gully Rd, where I knew an equestrian trail would take me back to the entry. Another very pleasant walk, with lots of **Silvereyes**, **White-browed Scrubwrens** and **Superb Fairywrens**. Along the equestrian trail section, two **Eastern Yellow Robins** were courting – both making a single note call before landing together on a branch over the track and one feeding the other.

**Farrer Ridge - north-east corner.**

This isn’t an area I visit on my usual walks on Farrer Ridge, but is quite extensive. The entry on Hawkesbury St, between houses, is quirky, since it is home to a large population of gnomes and other figures, as well as a street library. Only a few metres from the start, a **Satin Bowerbird** black male was singing his heart out, with some impressive mimicry. I’m guessing he had a bower hidden in the thick vegetation, and a green bird did fly in to join him. I passed a number of other tracks into the bush, so more visits are needed once time restrictions are lifted.

**Isaacs Ridge – Long Gully Rd**

I’ve walked straight through to the far end of the reserve, but not previously wandered around the area parallel to Long Gully Rd. It’s not a big area, and water running in the big gully prevents access further into the reserve at present. There were plenty of flowering plants, including pretty *Hovea heterophylla* which I’d not noted in the past. The dam (just visible from the road) is overflowing – but was inhabited only by a single **Australasian Grebe** and a pair of **Australian Wood Ducks**. **Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Crimson Rosellas** and **Galahs** were all checking out hollows, and an **Australian Raven** and **Nankeen Kestrel** seemed to be taking it in turns to pursue each other overhead. Frustratingly, as I approached the upper part of the gully, a large pale brown bird flushed and flew straight away from me into thicker areas of vegetation – there’s always a “mystery bird”!

**Woden Cemetery**

On the day I visited, a large group of Little Corellas (with four Long-billed Corellas) was having a lovely time chewing up pine cones from the very large conifers. They were stealing them from each other, jumping up onto gravestones, playing with fragments of cones and generally having a fun time. Superb Parrots were heard but not seen, but a pair of Gang-gang Cockatoos perched in the top of a tall tree in full view.

**Molonglo River track, from North Weston Ponds towards Scrivener Dam**

On visits to the Scrivener Dam lookout I had noticed tracks both sides of the river towards the new Molonglo suburbs. I started at North Weston Ponds, where the cycle track heads behind the RSPCA towards Civic. It’s possible to walk on the cycle track, or go down to near the river’s edge. I know Jean C. had previously reported nesting cormorants along the river, but I had not anticipated seeing several groups of Great Cormorant nests, many with chicks in them. About 2km along the track there is a small causeway (probably impassable when the river is up) which leads back to the starting point. The return track is closer to the nesting birds, but they are not so visible because of the vegetation, but I was able to see a darter nest which is invisible from the other side. (A repeat trip on another day had the added bonus of a Little Eagle circling above the nesting birds). I plan to do this walk again soon to see how the nesting is progressing – it seems much later than in previous years.

**Stirling Playing Fields**

These fields are on Streeton Drive, Weston Creek, and cover quite a large area, with some large trees on the perimeter. A very large group of Red-rumped Parrots was feeding on the unkempt part of the site, and the casuarinas were alive with Striated Thornbills. Two Grey Fantails were also in the casuarinas. Not a particularly exciting site, but since I drive that road quite often, I’m likely to stop there every now and again.

**Holder Wetlands (John Gorton Drive**)

This is a series of ponds (still netted to prevent waterbirds pulling up newly planted vegetation), surrounded by quite a lot of grassland, and when I was there several Australasian Pipits were visible close to the ponds. A few Pacific Black Ducks had managed to find the un-netted open water in the middle of some of the ponds. Silvereyes were calling around the ponds, and from the nearby creekline. I've seen reports from other birders of Brown Quail around these ponds, so worth a visit in the future.

**Mount Arawang (Cooleman Ridge Nature Reserve)**

Mount Arawang is in the southern-most part of Cooleman Ridge, on Namatjira Drive in Chapman. There is an entry near the first house if approaching on Namatjira Drive from Tuggeranong Parkway. There is a track around the hill, so it’s not a very long walk. I walked clockwise around the hill. Along the first section of track there was little of note, but then I turned onto the Dry Dam Firetrail. This starts with a short but very steep section, so it was useful that I could see a number of Satin Bowerbirds crossing the track – I had to stop and watch and catch my breath! Once the track levelled out I came upon a group of bowerbirds, with one blue bird and quite a few green birds. Some were obviously young males because at least one green bird was bringing decorations (yellowing leaves) to the bower. There were no blue items at all. The blue male tried, unsuccessfully, to chase away some of the green birds. At one point four green birds and the blue male were all within a couple of metres of the bower. This looks like a good spot to visit again.

**Oakey Hill Reserve**

Where is it: alongside the Tuggeranong Parkway in Lyons. I used the entry near where Heysen St passes under the Parkway – there’s a bitumen track right up to the water reservoir and comms tower from this entry. The day I went to Oakey Hill the weather was dreadful – windy, overcast, misty rain, and the temperature had only reached 12 by midday. Things were not looking hopeful at the start, but as I got near the water reservoir a male Golden Whistler appeared. Enough to brighten any day! On the fence around the reservoir four Scarlet Robins seemed to be enjoying the cooler conditions, preening and calling. Right next to the communications tower a family of Double-barred Finches were sheltering in the acacias, and as I tried to get a decent photo, I glanced up and found a stunning Rose Robin about two metres away. He didn’t stick around, but it made my day. As I returned to the car another group of DB Finches right near the entrance had me wandering off-track again, into a mixed flock with Grey Fantails, Yellow-rumped Thornbills and Weebills.

**Unnamed woodland patch, Namatjira Drive, Fisher**

I’ve driven past this patch, just near the BMX track, dozens of times, but never stopped. It’s much larger than I first thought, and is worth a repeat visit. Twenty-two species were seen, including many groups of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters passing over. A Gang-gang Cockatoo was heard early on, but seemed very far away. I found the bird in a eucalypt near the dam, which is quite large but not very bird-friendly, with no fringing vegetation at all. The birdiest section was around the entry gate close to Namatjira Drive. An acacia next to a low, open water tank contained seven Red Wattlebirds, which were taking turns drinking and bathing at the tank.